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Churches helped North Carolina ban same-sex marriage

Patrick O'Neill | May. 9, 2012

RALEIGH ? North Carolina became the 31st state and final Southern state to amend its constitution to ban same-sex marriage. Campaigns by religious groups supporting the ban were instrumental in the victory, organizers said.

With about 2.1 million votes cast, about 34 percent of the state's registered voters, the amendment , which reads "marriage between one man and one woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognized," was a approved by a 61percent to 39 percent margin.

?The involvement of the local churches across this state was absolutely the turning point,? State Baptist Convention president, the Rev. Mark Harris told Raleigh's *The News & Observer*.

The victory was celebrated by both of the state's Catholic bishops who strongly backed the ban despite the fact same-gender marriage is already illegal in the state. On the Raleigh diocese?s web site today, Bishop Michael F. Burbidge thanked voters for passing the referendum. ?Passage of the Amendment ? has now ensured that the definition of marriage, as the faithful and exclusive union of one man and one woman, and one which is open to the gift of children, is in accord with God's design and in keeping with the very nature of this sacred vocation.?

He also invited Catholics to pray with him that any divisions the referendum campaign may have caused would be healed ?by the grace of God and a mutual renewed commitment by all people of good will, so that we may together build a society reflective of the unity that is ours as members of God's family."

Not all Catholics welcomed Burbidge's celebratory words. Some were upset that Burbidge and Bishop Peter Jugis of Charolette, N.C., mailed more than 130,000 postcards to registered Catholics urging them to "Vote for Marriage." The mailing has been reported to the state board of elections for investigation.

Some Catholics writing to the News & Observer said the bishops had wasted time and money on the marriage campaign.

?Amendment One does not just deny gay couples the right to enter into a domestic union, but it also denies rights to all domestic partnerships and to children of these partnerships,? Paul and Marianne Williams wrote to the News & Observer.

?We are Catholic and are outraged that our bishop is telling us to vote for the amendment. We believe that a loving, committed domestic partnership, gay or straight, is just as valuable and a blessing to the community as our marriage of 38 years. Denying those rights does not protect our marriage. This amendment will hurt families. It will hurt our state,? wrote the couple, who were identified as members of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Raleigh.

Harris told the Raliegh newspaper that the string of victories at the state level ?supports arguments for amending the U.S. Constitution to allow only heterosexual marriages."

For background, see:

N. Carolina dioceses mail postcards supporting 'traditional marriage' [1]
North Carolina bishops push for ban on same-sex marriage [2]

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